

passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement. That agreement, which President Bush signed in May of 2004, will eliminate most trade barriers between the United States, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic. New consumers of American goods and more sales to Central America mean more jobs at home. It means more shared values.

It is fascinating that 20 years ago, only two of the CAFTA nations were established democracies, Costa Rica and the United States. Today, all seven can be counted among the free nations of the world. By linking their economies with democratic capitalism, CAFTA will help these nations against the threats posed in their neighborhood, mainly Venezuela and Cuba. It will strengthen their democracies and provide a model for freedom seekers around the world.

That does bring me to the world stage. In April, by a near unanimous vote, we passed the Emergency Defense War Supplemental and Tsunami Relief Act. On the morning of December 26, the world woke up to that terrible disaster of the tsunami in Southeast Asia. Deep in the Indian Ocean, an enormous earthquake, estimated at a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter scale, possibly one of most powerful earthquakes in history, caused a devastating tsunami which killed over 155,000 people, seriously injured half a million, and displaced as many as 5 million from their demolished homes. Thousands of people were literally washed out to sea as this enormous wall of water, traveling at speeds of over 500 miles an hour in the open ocean, struck the coast of that Indian Ocean realm.

As the waves receded, they took with them whole towns and villages. In the face of this terrible tragedy, America took swift action, and we responded on the floor of the Senate. We immediately dispatched military ships, planes and helicopters to deliver aid. Twelve thousand of our men and women in uniform worked around the clock to reach survivors, and Americans at home responded through the Internet, through donations, through their churches, through their mosques, moved by the terrible images and stories, and gave millions from their own pockets to help.

I had the opportunity to travel with Senator LANDRIEU to survey the damage in Sri Lanka. We met with local doctors and local orphanages and government officials and nongovernment organizations. We saw firsthand the tragedy and the human suffering the tsunami left. It was clear to us at the time exactly what we are seeing now, 6 months later, play out. It is going to take months and, indeed, years to respond to this tragedy. Many families with the loss of life never will be able to respond.

The legislation we passed in April provided an additional \$880 million to help the victims recover and rebuild.

The tsunami story may no longer be grabbing the headlines, but America is still hard at work right now in responding to this disaster.

We are also hard at work fighting the war on terror. The emergency defense bill provides \$75.9 billion in support for our brave soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, hunting down the enemy, helping to rebuild and to spread freedom and democracy. As the President has reminded the Nation, we are engaged in an epic struggle. The terrorists want to deny the Iraqi people the freedoms that are the right of all mankind. They want democracy in Iraq to fail so they can seize power, so they can spread their poison.

But they are not going to succeed. We will win this war. To do so, we must continue to stand together, united in our support of our troops and in support of our values. The terrorists are no match for the will of the American people, and they are no match for a world that is united against this terror.

The dastardly attack on London last week was an attack on the civilized world. I speak for all when I say that America stands shoulder to shoulder with the British people. We are in this together. Together we will win.

Over the past 6 months, the Senate has shown real leadership confronting a variety of priorities. We also have had some tense and dramatic moments; probably none more dramatic than the battle to confirm the President's judicial nominees. We appear to have begun to repair the confirmation process and to restore the dignity and the fairness and the respect to our debates over judicial nominees. As we have said all along, each of these candidates was amply qualified and enjoyed the majority support of the Senate. Each would be confirmed if brought to the Senate floor, and each of them were—Priscilla Owen, Janice Rogers Brown, William Pryor, Richard Griffin, David McKeague, Tom Griffith—confirmed to the Federal bench.

Unfortunately, in the process, they had to endure many unfair attacks on their character. Some of the nominees in the last Congress found the process that we put them through so painful that they dropped out and said: Don't consider me any more. That character assassination is too much. Therefore, they withdrew from consideration, at a loss for the American people. So it is no wonder that we now hear reports that smart, qualified judges don't even want to be considered for the Federal bench because of the process. We have put that process behind us. So many of them have concluded that Washington is no place to risk your reputation because you may never get it back.

As we look ahead to the Supreme Court nomination process, things are going very well.

I do urge my colleagues to make sure that our deliberations are fair and dignified and respectful of that nominee when the nominee is presented.

This last Tuesday, I mentioned that the President is not obligated to con-

sult with Senators before making a nomination. In fact, he is not obligated to consult with anyone; consultation is a courtesy, not a constitutional mandate. But the President has reached out to both sides of the aisle, the Judiciary Committee, individual Senators, with one-on-one meetings, and his highest staff are continually listening and taking suggestions. I commend the administration and the President for reaching out in an inclusive and bipartisan manner, in a manner that really is unprecedented.

Mr. President, let me just say that I believe what we have seen is a promising start to what can and should be a thoughtful and statesmanlike debate as we prepare for that nominee coming from the President for the Supreme Court. In that debate, I want to continue to encourage my colleagues to place principle before partisan politics and place results before rhetoric. We owe it to the American people to conduct this nominations process, which involves the major institutions of our Government, the three grand institutions of justice, legislation, and the executive branch coming together. We owe it to the American people to continue to move forward with those meaningful solutions to real problems.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the hour of 10 a.m. having arrived, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3057, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3057) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Appropriations, with an amendment.

(Strike the part shown in black brackets and insert the part shown in italic.)

H.R. 3057

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,